

EXHIBIT

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California lawmaker condemns dismantling of Head Start program



by Joyce Chu April 2, 2025



U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy is dismantling the Office of Head Start (OHS) and the Office of Child Care (OCC). File photo.

Congress is calling for the reinstatement of federal employees that oversee critical early childhood programs serving families in poverty as regional Head Start offices are slashed — including one that serves Santa Clara County.

U.S. Sen. Alex Padilla is leading dozens of senators in condemning U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy for dismantling the Office of Head Start (OHS) and the Office of Child Care (OCC). The [Head Start](#) program helps connect children across the nation with free medical services and gives parents job training

and education to help with child development. The Office of Child Care provides critical child care subsidies.

California's Head Start program employs nearly 27,000 workers and served more than 84,000 children in 2022. At least five of 10 regional Head Start offices have closed in an effort to consolidate, including the one in San Francisco, potentially hindering the government's ability to administer these programs.

"We are deeply concerned by reports of a high number of employees at OHS and OCC who have been fired across the country who provide critical support to Head Start programs and help make child care safer and more affordable," Padilla wrote in a Wednesday letter signed by 27 other senators. "The termination of staff is alarming and will compound the challenges already facing these programs and services, including the lack of timely and transparent information, with no clear planning nor considerations for how early childhood services will be impacted."

County Board of Education President Maimona Berta said with the San Francisco office closing, their biggest concern is the Head Start grant application recently submitted.

"Who will process our application, and how will this impact funding for our programs?" Berta told San José Spotlight. "We need clarification to ensure there's no disruption in support for the children and families who rely on these services."

Local Head Start staff received pink slips around March 15 amid uncertainty as to whether the [federal program](#) under the Trump administration will reimburse the Santa Clara County Office of Education for the costs.

"Unless there is certainty from the federal government that the Head Start Grant will be renewed, SCCOE and other agencies must do layoffs in order to ensure fiscal solvency," Interim Superintendent Charles Hinman told San José Spotlight. "We are not able to begin rescinding layoffs notices until there is certainty around the funding of the Head Start grant."

The cuts on child care subsidies and early childhood programs come at a time when families are increasingly struggling to find and pay for child care.

Roughly 700 local day care facilities [have closed](#) in Santa Clara County over the past decade, with more than 300 closing during the pandemic, according to officials. In addition, the county is also faced with a [shortage](#) of day care workers, as child care assistants are fleeing their jobs for other work with higher pay. Others have left the area completely due to [the high costs of living](#).



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The senators are also calling for Kennedy to answer questions by April 11 regarding how many workers have been terminated at the Office of Head Start and Office of Child Care, and what assessments had been done to measure the impact of these programs.

His uncle and former President John F. Kennedy was the inspiration for the Head Start program.

“This attack on employees at a time when children, families, child care providers, and early educators are relying on critical early childhood programs undermines the Department’s role in administering and conducting oversight of early childhood programs,” Padilla wrote.

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